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ACTION SCT-00

INFO	LOG-00	ACDA-17	ACDE-00	AID-00	ARA-01	A-00	CA-02
	CCO-00	CG-00	CIAE-00	COME-00	CTME-00	OASY-00	DODE-00
	DOEE-00	DOTE-00	SRPP-00	DS-00	EB-01	EUR-01	FAAE-00
	FBIE-00	H-01	IMMC-01	TEDE-00	INR-00	INSE-00	L-01
	ADS-00	M-00	NEA-01	NRCE-00	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	OCS-03
	OIS-01	OMB-01	PA-02	PM-00	PRS-01	P-00	SP-00
	SSO-00	SS-00	TRSE-00	T-00	USIE-00	USSS-00	ASDS-01
	PMB-00	DSCC-00	DRL-09	G-00	/044W		
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P 051917Z OCT 95
FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8307
INFO USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS PM//SCCC//
AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMEMBASSY ASUNCION
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

UNCLAS BUENOS AIRES 006235

SENSITIVE

DEPARTMENT FOR ARA/BSC, S/CT

E.O. 12356: N/A
TAGS: PTER, PGOV, IR,, AR
SUBJECT: MORE ARRESTS IN AMIA CASE
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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: OSCAR J OLSON
DATE/CASE ID: 13 MAY 2008 200601030

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REF: BUENOS AIRES 6166

1. POLICE HAVE NOW ARRESTED ALEJANDRO FEDERICO MONJO, OWNER OF A CAR DEALERSHIP THAT FACILITATED PROCUREMENT AND SALE OF STOLEN AUTOS INCLUDING - ACCORDING TO INVESTIGATORS - THE RENAULT VAN USED IN THE BOMBING IN JULY 1994 OF THE ARGENTINE JEWISH MUTUAL ASSOCIATION (AMIA). MONJO ESCAPED THE MASSIVE POLICE SWEEP CONDUCTED ON MONDAY, OCTOBER 2, REPORTEDLY BECAUSE ONE GROUP OF POLICE JUMPED THE GUN ON THE COORDINATED AND PRECISELY TIMED ACTION, PERMITTING MONJO TO GET WORD THAT HIS ARREST WAS IMMINENT. OTHER REPORTS, HOWEVER, SAY THAT MONJO WAS TIPPED OFF BY CORRUPT OFFICERS IN THE FEDERAL POLICE, AND THAT THOSE SAME OFFICERS WERE TRYING TO OBTAIN A FRAUDULENT PASSPORT TO EXFILTRATE MONJO FROM ARGENTINA BEFORE HIS ARREST.

2. MONJO IS CONSIDERED KEY TO SEVERAL ASPECTS OF THE INVESTIGATION. INVESTIGATORS SAY THAT MONJO WAS PART OF THE WEB LINKING WHATEVER FOREIGN NATIONALS MIGHT BE INVOLVED IN THE BOMBING AND LOCAL CORRUPT POLICE. ACCORDING TO THE INVESTIGATORS' THEORY, MONJO HAD CONDUCTED EXTENSIVE BUSINESS DEALINGS WITH IRANIAN DIPLOMATS, INCLUDING AN ALLEGED PRIOR ATTEMPT TO LOCATE A VAN IDENTICAL TO THE ONE USED IN THE BOMBING. MONJO ALSO IS CONSIDERED KEY TO FINDING OUT THE IDENTITIES OF EVERYONE WHO HAD CONTACT WITH THE VAN USED IN THE BOMBING, SINCE HE ALLEGEDLY MASTERMINDED THE ENTIRE PROCESS, FROM CHANGING PARTS OF THE VEHICLE TO ALTERING REGISTRATION DOCUMENTS

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BEFORE DELIVERY TO THE BOMBERS.

3. MONJO HAD BEEN A SUSPECT AND BEEN INTERROGATED IN 1994, BUT THE JUDGES RESPONSIBLE FOR EVALUATING THE EVIDENCE AT THE TIME THOUGHT THAT THE CASE AGAINST HIM WAS TOO WEAK TO WARRANT ARREST AND PROSECUTION. MONJO CLAIMED THEN THAT HE HAD BEEN VACATIONING IN THE CARIBBEAN DURING THE TIME THE ATTACK ON AMIA WAS PLANNED AND CARRIED OUT. MONJO REPORTEDLY HAS MADE MILLIONS FROM HIS "USED" CAR BUSINESS, WHICH TAX

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AUTHORITIES ARE NOW INVESTIGATING. ON TUESDAY, POLICE ARRESTED LAURA BRACCHI, A MONJO GIRLFRIEND, AT AN AUTOMATIC TELLER MACHINE WHILE SHE WAS ATTEMPTING TO WITHDRAW FUNDS FROM ONE OF MONJO'S BANK ACCOUNTS.

4. COMMENT: THE HIRC HEARING AND ATTENDANT PUBLICITY LAST WEEK APPEARS TO HAVE PRODDED ARGENTINE LAW ENFORCEMENT AUTHORITIES TO ACCELERATE THEIR PROBE. THE MEDIA ATTENTION AND REINVIGORATED INVESTIGATION SEEM TO BEAR OUT THE JEWISH COMMUNITY LEADERS' CONTENTION THAT EXTERNAL PRESSURE, AS UNWELCOME AS IT IS, IS NEEDED TO SPUR GREATER EFFORTS IN THE CASE. WHILE IT IS STILL TOO EARLY TO SAY WHETHER OR NOT THESE ACTIONS ARE PUTTING INVESTIGATORS CLOSER TO SOLVING THE CASE, THE LATEST ARRESTS AT LEAST ARE TAKING SOME OF THE POLITICAL HEAT OFF THE AUTHORITIES FOR NOW. SOME OBSERVERS INDEED WONDER WHETHER THE ENTIRE STOLEN-CAR CONNECTION IN THE AMIA CASE IS NOT AT BEST A DEAD END AND AT WORST A DISTRACTION FROM THE REAL TRAIL OF THE TERRORISTS. THE GOA ALSO SEEMS TO BE DOING ITS BEST TO CALM THE TROUBLED POLITICAL

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WATERS PROVOKED BY THE WASHINGTON HEARING. VICE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS FERNANDO PETRELLA HAS EVEN CALLED ONE HIGHLY CRITICAL WITNESS, JEWISH LEADER RUBEN BERAJA, "A FRIEND OF THE FOREIGN MINISTRY," DESPITE BERAJA'S CHARGE THAT THE GOA IS "WEAK IN ITS DEALINGS WITH COUNTRIES KNOWN TO HELP TERRORISTS." IN AN APPARENT RAPPROCHEMENT BETWEEN POLICE AND THE LOCAL JEWISH COMMUNITY, SENIOR OFFICERS ATTENDED YOM KIPPUR SERVICES ON WEDNESDAY - AT THE INVITATION OF BERAJA.

GODARD

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